

'It's about time'

Many say they'd support female president

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The place of women in society has changed drastically in the last half century.

In the 1950s, it was common for most women to stay home and raise families. In 2002, most women work outside the home and are in positions of power in business, education and politics.

With such changes made in just 50 years, it would seem that the possibility of a woman being elected to the position of president of the United States would be great.

Or is it?

According to both students and faculty at Quincy High School, "it's about time" a woman is elected president.

"I think it would be good and give a variety of people in the government," said sophomore Chad Miller.

"I don't believe the sex of a person is what determines the quality of their leadership," said Sue Crist, Quincy High School computer instructor. "It is character, morals, and values that determine effectiveness."

For some Americans, the current front-runner for the first female president is Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton. At Quincy High School, Clinton seems to have a lot of support.

"We (women) are pretty equal, but not entirely," said Seyhan Hope, a junior. "Putting a woman in charge, or at a higher position, such as Mrs. Clinton, may make us all equal as we should be." "I believe if she is good at it, I would support her, even if she runs for president," said Dave Dietrich, a Quincy security guard.

State elected female politicians say they have hope a woman will be elected president in the near future.

"Women have some important advantages as candidates, advantages that are powerful enough to propel a woman into the presidency," said Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Chicago. "Women are viewed by voters as more honest and trustworthy, less likely to be captives of special interests, and more inclusive in their decision-making. The public is looking for someone to trust. Women fit the profile."

Until now, only America's first ladies could try to "fit the profile." It began with first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of President

Franklin D. Roosevelt. She was known for speaking out on women's issues, as well as racial issues - she resigned from the Daughters of the American Revolution because the association discriminated against blacks.

Other first ladies have since followed Eleanor Roosevelt's precedent. During her husband's first term, Hillary Clinton tried to create health-care legislation. In a speech she made in 1998 about

women's rights, she said, "It falls to every generation to imagine the future, and it is our task to do so now."

First lady Laura Bush set a record when she became the only first lady to fill in for the president during his weekly radio address.

Almost a decade earlier, Barbara Bush spoke at a graduation ceremony at Wellesley College. At first, students were against her visit. They protested that Bush -- a traditional woman who did not work outside of the home -- should not be allowed to address graduates of a women's university.

But when Barbara Bush took the stage in front of the Class of 1990, she had the last word.

"Somewhere out in this audience may even be someone who will one day follow my footsteps and preside over the White House as the president's spouse," she said. "And I wish him well."

Still, how much longer will it be for women to make the transition from first spouse to president? According to Schakowsky, it will only be done when others help women run for office.

"In order to increase the number of women in Congress, we need to encourage more women to run," she said. "When women run, women win in equal proportion to men."

Springfield Mayor Karen Hasara agreed, as she said in an interview for the Voice series "Politics Today."

"I think women have already become a leading force in politics, but the numbers at the top levels are still not where they should be," Hasara said.

One hundred years ago, the concept of any woman expressing the freedom to vote was merely a dream. Today, not only can women vote, but also they can run for any office of their choosing, including the White House.

Now, it's just a matter of waiting for a woman to make it past a presidential primary.

How much longer will that be?

As Hasara put it: "I really think even in my lifetime, I will live to see a woman president. I really do."

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